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INQUIRY

Into the Object and Tendency

OF THE

PRESENT WAR.

Addressed to the Citizens

OF

NEW-HAMPSHIRE.

PORtSMOUTH.

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INQUIRY, &c.

IN a time of general calamity, it is the duty of every individual to come forward in the public service. However low his talents, or humble his station, he still may do something for the benefit of others. Some may be influenced by his example, and others convinced by his arguments.—The careless and indifferent may be roused to attention by his exertions; and the restless curiosity which he has excited, may terminate in deep conviction, and resolute action.

It is with these sentiments, that the author of the following pages presents them to his fellow-citizens. He deems the subject of infinite importance to all. Another year, and it may be too late to examine it. If his name could add any weight to his arguments, or authority to his opinions, it would be cheerfully given. He has no private interest to advance, and no party passions to indulge. But he feels that on this year depends the peace and liberty of his country. If this year is suffered to pass away in indolent security, the next may find him, in common with his countrymen, the subject of a military despotism.

It is my design in the following pages to inquire into the real objects of the present war; I shall endeavour to ascertain them,

1. From the time and circumstances under which it was declared.

2. From the manner in which it has been carried on,

An opinion has been extensively diffused in this country, that since we are engaged in hostilities and the enemy is at our door, it is of little consequence to inquire how or why we plunged into war. We must contend with England, say the partisans of the administration, till some decisive victory enables us to obtain peace upon our own terms. Government can do nothing without unanimity among the people. It is our duty to lay aside party dissensions, and to unite in support of the administration, whether the war be right or wrong.—I answer, if the war be not just and honorable, I dare not wish it success. I care not what pretences were used at its commencement, nor what passions are called forth in its support. If its real objects be unjust or dangerous, it is my duty to oppose it.

Every man who has reflected upon the nature of government and the rights and duties of individuals, knows that there is a point, beyond which submission to government is a crime. We are accustomed to laugh at the folly, or pity the weakness of

those European nations which have so long endured in silence the tyranny of monarchs and nobles. Let the people unite in their own defence, we have said, and the power of their oppressors, antient and majestic as it is, will crumble into dust. But *our government is one of our own choice.*—*Our rulers are our servants.* If they do wrong we remove them. We suffer no man to remain in office long enough to obtain the power of oppressing us. True—but is there no *party-oppression?* Does not all history, and all experience prove that the passions of a multitude are more blind, furious, and ungovernable, than those of an individual?—Have the minority no feelings to be insulted, no rights to be injured, no blessings to be destroyed? If a triumphant party were disposed to trample on the rights and liberties of their fellow citizens, would it not be their first object to prevent any inquiry into the nature and design of their measures?

It is a maxim of the British government that “the King can do no wrong.” The true meaning of it is, that whatever evil is committed, is imputed not to the King, but to his ministers. And this is reasonable—for though the King cannot be punished, his ministers have often been condemned to death for their political crimes. The friends of the war have adopted this maxim, and applied it literally, in its full extent, to our own government. With them King JAMES can do no wrong; not

because his evil deeds are imputed to Gallatin, Armstrong or Monroe, but because the President, by virtue of his office, is invested with absolute infallibility.

Avoid then the man who would diminish your freedom of inquiry. Place the brand of infamy on him who tells you to support the war, whether it be right or wrong. If the designs of the administration were pure, they would court inquiry. What honest man ever dreaded an investigation of his character? The words of inspiration have declared that if "men love darkness rather than light" it is "because their deeds are evil."

The motives assigned by the American Government for the declaration of war, are in substance the following.

1. The impressment of our Seamen,
2. The principles of Blockade imputed to the British Government.
3. The Orders in Council.

It is not my design to examine these causes separately, and at length. Every man acquainted with the history of our country and with that of Europe for the last twenty years, must see that they are utterly insufficient to justify an appeal to arms. They are now indeed abandoned by the very partisans of war; and the conquest of Canada, or the chastisement of the Indians, or some

such worthy motive, is substituted for the official declarations of government. It is right that a war commenced with fraud should be continued with injustice.

The orders in Council were repealed, as is well known, within a few days after our declaration of war ;—and it should never be forgotten that, at that time French decrees more oppressive in principle and more outrageous in language had existed for years without any shew of resistance on the part of our government. The right of paper blockade as it has been called, or the right of declaring a place blockaded, without an adequate force to invest it, has been formally and officially disclaimed by Great Britain. And yet the imputation of this doctrine to her is still considered as one of the justifying causes of the war !

The last subject is the impressment of Seamen. Great Britain has never claimed the right of taking American seamen from American ships. In searching for her own subjects, mistakes have sometimes happened. The similarity of language, countenance, and manners rendered it unavoidable. But even on this subject an amicable arrangement was made with the British Government by Mr. Monroe the present Secretary of State, and Mr. Pinkney the present Attorney General of the U. S. Mr. Jefferson refused to ratify the agree-

ment, and sent back the treaty without even submitting it to the Senate. He was unwilling to live at peace with England, while France was her enemy.

In June 1812 an attempt was made by the Federal members of the Legislature of Massachusetts, to procure from the several towns of that Commonwealth an accurate list of their impressed citizens. This attempt was frustrated by the democratic Senate of that State. The partisans of the war well know (and they dare not deny it) that the stories of impressment have been exaggerated beyond all parallel. If this war has been commenced for "free trade and sailors' rights," is it not incredible that Massachusetts, the cradle and nurse of half the seamen in the Union should be opposed to it? Can it be reconciled with any principles of human sympathy, that the negro driver of the South should feel more for the New-England sailor, than his own Parents, and Brothers, and Friends? Away with such folly.

What then were the real causes of the war? I answer—

1. To aid the cause of France.
2. To depress New-England, and destroy her Commerce.

No man in his senses can doubt that there is a secret understanding between the Government of this country and that of

France. By a series of naval victories unexampled in history, Great Britain had attained the sovereignty of the ocean. Her insular situation protected her from the armies of France. She was only vulnerable in her commerce. The Corsican usurper, with some sagacity, determined to diminish her power, by restricting her trade. The manufactures of Great Britain were in consequence, excluded from all the ports of the continent: Still all this availed him nothing while the United States were permitted to obtain their supplies at the markets of this hated nation. The United States were therefore persuaded to lay an embargo; and they were publicly congratulated by the French Emperor upon having thus united with him in his "continental system." That embargo was known in France long before the tidings of it could possibly have reached that country in the ordinary channels of communication. It was undoubtedly a measure originally planned and recommended by the Court of Napoleon. In January 1808 the French Emperor announced to General Armstrong that "war exists in fact between England and the United States." On the 18th of June 1812, the Congress of the United States adopted the same words. Add to this, the remarkable fact, that while our whole diplomatic correspondence with England has been regularly published, not a single entire letter of the correspondence with France has been given to the public, since Mr.

Jefferson's accession to the chief magistracy. History shews the possibility of corruption. I do not charge it upon any man. But the effects of blind partiality or vindictive hatred may be as ruinous to a nation, as the corruption of its magistrates.

When I consider the manner in which this calamitous war has been conducted, I can entertain no doubt of its real object. What! send our troops to the wilds of Canada, and leave our seaports defenceless for the protection of *Commerce*! Seal up every bay, and river, and creek in the country for the promotion of *free trade*! Deprive every sailor in the nation of the wages of industry, and compel him either to quit his home, or to languish in a prison for the security of his *rights*! They might have spared us this mockery. But they knew the spirit of New-England was dead: Six years of Embargo, Non-Intercourse, and Non-Importation had taught them what we were capable of enduring. The Lion was well nigh dead before the Ass ventured to lift up his heels against him.

There never was a people so extensively and entirely commercial as the inhabitants of New-England. The love of enterprise and adventure had diffused itself through every class in Society. Almost every man was either directly or remotely connected with the commercial interests of the country. Now a war is undertaken, avowedly for the interest of commerce, against the opinions

and wishes of this great body of people; It is carried on by commercial restrictions. To compel England to give up the right of impressment not a fishing boat is permitted to throw a line in the ocean—not a sheet of canvass to whiten in the breeze. One great object of this war is undoubtedly then, *to destroy the commerce of New-England, and diminish her political power.*

But these calamities, deplorable as they are, are not the greatest we have to fear. Farmers, send not your sleighs to market, you may incur the penalties of treason. Some vigilant spy of the custom-house may imagine you are proceeding toward the enemy. Some starving neighbor may cast a wistfull eye upon your money. It may be convenient for him to seize it, and to pursue you with the vexation and trouble of a law-suit. If he succeeds, he divides the prize with the Government ; if he fails, your property, at the end of a year or two is restored, without any compensation for your trouble, or damage for the detention. A people that will quietly submit to such laws as the last Embargo act . . . ripe for slavery. The fruit may be plucked by the first adventurer that dares to pluck it.

“ What measures shall we take ?” I hear you ask with astonishment and dismay. I answer—Try first every constitutional means of redress. Suffer not a single advocate of the war to hold an office in your

gift. Petition your government for peace. It is in their power to give it. If these exertions fail, rally round your State Government. It is still independent. If the war continues another year, you will cease to be the member of a confederation. You will become the province of an Empire.

Farmers! be not seduced by the high prices of your produce. This war is costing every one of you 33 dollars a year.†—In the course of this year the tax-gatherer will visit you. His visits will be repeated, and his demands increased. Your present additional prices will not pay the interest of the debt you are incurring. Neither are the taxes heavy as they are sufficient for that purpose. Your grain and beef and wool is consumed by the army. That army you are paying yourselves. I pray God you are not paying it for your own ruin!

Assuming the annual expense of the war to be forty millions, which is the smallest possible sum, and dividing this among the several States in proportion to the direct tax, the sum which New-Hampshire will annually contribute towards the cost of the war will be one million, three hundred and twenty three thousand, nine hundred and six dollars as $3,000,000 : 40,000,000 :: 96,793 : 1,923,906$ or, as the whole direct tax, is to the whole annual expense, so is the proportion which New-Hampshire pays of the first, to that which she contributes to the second.

The number of inhabitants in this State according to the last census was 214,414—divide 1,923,906 dollars by this number, and the quotient will be six dollars and ten cents to be paid by every man, woman, and child in the State.

Supposing every Farmer's family to consist upon an average of five persons, this war brings him in debt every year thirty dollars and fifty cents. *one*

The war has lasted ~~one~~ year and eight months. If peace were made at this moment, it would leave every Farmer in the State, ~~one~~ dollars and ~~one~~ cents in debt.



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